

a data input device coupled to the processor for inputting at least personnel identification data identifying a person seeking access to an area of the machine,

the processor being responsive to input personnel identification data for operating one or more lock mechanisms in accordance with access authorization corresponding to an identified person.

11. (Amended) Apparatus for selectively controlling access to one or more physical areas of each of a plurality of gaming machines, the apparatus comprising:

plural electrically operable lock mechanisms respectively associated with the areas of the machines and each physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to its associated area,

each machine having a local processor coupled to each of its lock mechanisms and a local data storage and retrieval device coupled to the local processor for storing a program for controlling the local processor,

a host computer in data communication with each of the local processors,

a host data storage and retrieval device storing a host program for controlling the host computer and a database including data relating to the identifications of all authorized personnel and the area or areas of each machine for which each person is authorized access,

input/output apparatus coupled to the host computer, and

local data input devices respectively coupled to the local processors for inputting at least personnel identification data identifying a person seeking access to the associated machine,

each local processor being responsive to input personnel identification data for communicating it to the host computer for comparison with the database and being responsive to

signals from the host computer for operating one or more of its lock mechanisms in accordance with access authorization corresponding to an identified person.

27. (Amended) In a gaming machine having a mechanical key-operated latch assembly including an actuator member movable by a mechanical key between latching and unlatching conditions, access control apparatus comprising:

an electrically operable lock mechanism movable between first and second conditions,
and

control circuitry coupled to the lock mechanism for controlling operation thereof,
the lock mechanism being disposed so that in its first condition, it prevents movement of the actuator member from its latching condition and in its second condition it permits movement of the actuator member between its latching and unlatching conditions.

32. (Amended) A method of selectively controlling access to one or more of plural physical areas of a gaming machine, the method comprising:

providing each area with an electrically operable lock mechanism physically movable between unlocked and locked conditions with respect to the area;

storing data including personnel identification data and access authorization data indicative of the areas, if any, of the machine for which a person seeking access to the machine is authorized;

inputting at the machine at least personnel identification information identifying a person seeking access to the machine at the time access is sought; and

electrically unlocking the lock mechanism of only those areas, if any, for which the person seeking access is authorized.